

# Crediting Smoothies for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program

This guidance applies to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) meal patterns for grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP, and Afterschool Snack Program (ASP). For information on the meal patterns and crediting foods, refer to the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12](#), and visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpages.



Smoothie ingredients that credit toward the meal patterns for grades K-12 include full-strength vegetable juice and pureed vegetables (vegetables component); full-strength fruit juice and pureed fruits (fruits component); milk that meets the meal pattern requirements (milk component); and yogurt or soy yogurt (meat/meat alternates component). Creditable ingredients in smoothies must provide at least the minimum creditable amount to credit toward the meal patterns for grades K-12. The minimum creditable amounts are  $\frac{1}{8}$  cup for the vegetables component;  $\frac{1}{8}$  cup for the fruits component;  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup for the milk component (applies to smoothies only); and  $\frac{1}{8}$  cup for yogurt.

School food authorities (SFAs) must maintain appropriate documentation to indicate the crediting information for smoothies. For example, to credit a strawberry smoothie as  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of the fruits component and 1 ounce equivalent of the meat/meat alternates component, the documentation must indicate that the serving contains  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of pureed strawberries and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of yogurt.

If a smoothie contains less than the full serving of a component, the menu must include an additional food from that component to meet the full requirement.

## Required Crediting Documentation

To credit smoothies made on site, SFAs must have a standardized recipe that indicates the meal pattern contribution of each component in the serving. For information on standardized recipes, visit the “[Crediting Foods Made from Scratch](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.



To credit commercial smoothies, SFAs must obtain a product formulation statement (PFS) or Child Nutrition (CN) label (if available). For information on CN labels and PFS forms, refer to the

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CSDE's resources, [Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labeling Program](#), [Product Formulation Statements](#) and [Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the NSLP and SBP](#), and the USDA's PFS forms and [Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement](#). For additional guidance on documentation for commercial products, visit the "Crediting Commercial Processed Products in School Nutrition Programs" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

## Recommended Daily Limit for Smoothies

The USDA recommends limiting smoothies to one meal or ASP snack per day. For example, if a smoothie is served at breakfast, the school menus for lunch and ASP snack should not include a smoothie.

## Crediting Fruits and Vegetables in Smoothies

Pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies credit only as **juice** toward the vegetables component or fruits component. Crediting is based on the volume (cups) of pureed fruits and vegetables per serving. For example, a smoothie that contains ½ cup of pureed strawberries credits as ½ cup of fruit juice. SFAs must document the amount of pureed fruits and vegetables per serving (refer to "Required Crediting Documentation" in this document).

- **Juice limit:** Pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies count toward the juice limit with all other types of juice, e.g., 100 percent juice (fresh, frozen, and made from concentrate); frozen juice pops made from 100 percent juice; and juice from canned fruit served in 100 percent juice. At lunch, fruit juice (including pureed fruit in smoothies) cannot exceed half of the total fruits offered during the week, and vegetable juice (including pureed vegetables in smoothies) cannot exceed half of the total vegetables offered during the week. At breakfast, fruit juice together with vegetable juice and vegetable/fruit juice blends (including pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies) cannot exceed half of the total fruits offered during the week. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Juice for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#).
- **Vegetable subgroups:** Vegetable smoothies credit toward the vegetable subgroups at lunch. Smoothies that contain one vegetable or one vegetable juice credit toward that subgroup. For example, a smoothie made with pureed carrots or 100 percent carrot juice credits toward the red/orange subgroup. The crediting of smoothies that contain two or more different pureed vegetables or vegetable juices depends on whether the vegetables are from the same or different subgroups.
  - **Same subgroup:** Smoothies that contain pureed vegetables and vegetable juice from the same subgroup credit toward that vegetable subgroup. For example, a smoothie that contains pureed carrots and tomatoes, or a 100 percent carrot/tomato juice

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blend, credits toward the red/orange vegetable subgroup because both vegetables are from the red/orange vegetable subgroup.

- **Different subgroup:** Smoothies that contain vegetables and vegetable juice from more than one subgroup credit only toward the “other” vegetable subgroup. For example, a smoothie that contains pureed carrots (red/orange), spinach (dark green), tomato (red/orange), and watercress (dark green); or a 100 percent vegetable juice blend that contains carrots, spinach, tomato, and watercress; credits toward the “additional” vegetable subgroup.
- **Mixed fruits and vegetables:** Smoothies that contain a mix of pureed fruits and vegetables, or 100 percent fruit and vegetable juice blends, credit based on the greatest fruit or vegetable ingredient.
  - **Commercial smoothie products** credit as the fruits component if the first juice ingredient is fruit juice or fruit puree. If the first juice ingredient is vegetable juice or vegetable puree, the product credits as the vegetables component.
  - **Smoothies made on site** credit as the fruits component if fruit juice or fruit puree is the greatest juice ingredient in the standardized recipe. If the greatest juice ingredient is vegetable juice or vegetable puree, the smoothie recipe credits as the vegetables component.
- **Breakfast:** The breakfast meal pattern requires 1 cup of vegetables, fruits, or both. Pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies may credit as the entire vegetables and fruits component at breakfast. For example, a serving of smoothie that contains 1 cup of pureed mangoes and carrots credits as the full fruits component.
- **Lunch:** The lunch meal pattern requires a serving of the fruits component and a serving of vegetables component. Lunch menus cannot offer a smoothie and juice as the only two servings of fruits and vegetables because both credit as juice, and would exceed the juice limit. For example, the lunch menu cannot offer a strawberry smoothie as the fruits component and tomato juice as the vegetables component. At least one of the required servings of the vegetables component or fruits component must be a whole fruit or vegetable (i.e., fresh, frozen, canned, or dried).
- **Snack:** Vegetables and fruits are one component in the ASP meal pattern for grades K-12. The ASP meal pattern requires two of the four components (milk, meat/meat alternates, vegetables/fruits, and grains/breads). Smoothies that contain  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of juice (including pureed fruits and vegetables) may credit as the entire vegetables/fruits component at snack. Smoothies containing juice and milk may credit as either juice or milk, but not both in the



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same snack. The snack menu cannot include juice (including pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies) when milk is the only other snack component.

The examples below illustrate these requirements. The required servings for the ASP meal pattern for grades K-12 are 1 cup of milk, 1 ounce of meat/meat alternates,  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of vegetables/fruits, and 1 serving of grains/breads.

- **Example 1:** A smoothie recipe contains  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of pureed fruit (credits as fruit juice) and 1 cup of unflavored low-fat milk per serving. The menu planner may choose to credit the smoothie as either the full vegetables/fruits component or the full milk component, but not both in the same snack. To be reimbursable, the snack must include the full serving of a second component that is not juice, vegetables/fruits, or milk (i.e., meat/meat alternates, or grains). For example, the snack menu could include a 2-ounce whole-grain corn muffin (grains component) as the second component.
- **Example 2:** A smoothie recipe contains  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of pureed fruit (credits as fruit juice) and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of unflavored low-fat milk per serving. The pureed fruit provides the full fruits component. However, the milk cannot credit as the full milk component because it is less than 1 cup. To be reimbursable, the snack must include the full serving of a second component that is not juice, vegetables/fruits, or milk (i.e., meat/meat alternates or grains/breads). For example, the snack menu could include 1 ounce of cheese cubes (meat/meat alternates component) as the second component.

### Crediting Milk in Smoothies

Milk in smoothies credits as the milk component based on the amount per serving. For example, a smoothie that contains  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of milk credits as  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of the milk component. SFAs must document the amount of milk per serving (refer to “[Required Crediting Documentation](#)” in this document).

- **Allowable types of milk:** For school year 2020-21, allowable types of milk include unflavored low-fat (1%) milk, unflavored fat-free milk, and flavored fat-free milk. Flavored milk does not credit in the school meal patterns.
- **Minimum creditable amount:** The minimum creditable amount of milk in a smoothie is  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup. SFAs must have a standardized recipe or PFS to document the type and amount of milk per serving (refer to “[Required Crediting Documentation](#)” in this document).

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- **Milk variety:** When smoothies contain milk, the USDA’s requirement for a variety of milk options in the NSLP and SBP still applies. Schools must offer at least two different choices of fluid milk on the serving line. A variety of milk is not required for the ASP.

### Crediting Yogurt in Smoothies

Yogurt or soy yogurt in smoothies credits as the meat/meat alternates component based on the amount per serving. A ½-cup serving of yogurt credits as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. SFAs must document the amount of yogurt per serving (refer to “[Required Crediting Documentation](#)” in this document). For information on the crediting requirements for yogurt, refer to the CSDE’s resource, *Crediting Yogurt for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP*.

- **Milk substitution:** The addition of yogurt to a smoothie is not a substitution for fluid milk in the NSLP and SBP meal patterns. Fluid milk must be offered in all lunches and breakfasts to meet the milk component requirement. To meet the USDA’s requirement for a variety of milk options, schools must also offer fluid milk on the serving line in the required quantity (refer to “[Milk variety](#)” in this document).

### Additional Ingredients

Smoothies may include additional ingredients to improve flavor and consistency, such as oatmeal and peanut butter. These ingredients do not credit toward the school meal patterns.

Additional ingredients in smoothies count toward the weekly dietary specifications for lunch and breakfast. Their inclusion cannot cause the menu to exceed the weekly limits for calories, saturated fats, and sodium. For information on the dietary specifications, refer to section 6 of the CSDE’s *Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12*, and the “[Dietary Specifications \(Nutrition Standards for School Meals\)](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

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## Crediting Example

Table 1 shows how a smoothie made with blueberry puree, low-fat yogurt, fat-free milk, and oatmeal could credit toward the meal patterns for grades K-12.

Table 1. Meal pattern contribution of a blueberry smoothie recipe	
Ingredient	Meal pattern contribution <sup>1</sup>
Frozen blueberry puree, ½ cup	½ cup of fruit juice (fruits component) <sup>2</sup>
Low-fat blueberry yogurt, ½ cup	1 ounce of meat/meat alternates
Low-fat milk, 4 fluid ounces	4 fluid ounces of milk <sup>3</sup>
Oatmeal, 2 tablespoons	None (does not credit in smoothies)
<p>1 If a creditable ingredient does not provide the full meal pattern component (minimum amount), the menu must include additional servings of that component to meet the meal patterns.</p> <p>2 Pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies count toward the juice limit. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, <a href="#">Crediting Juice for Grades K-12 for the NSLP and SBP</a>.</p> <p>3 The minimum creditable amount of milk in a smoothie is ¼ cup. If a smoothie contains less than the full serving, the menu must include the additional amount of milk to provide the full milk component.</p>	



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## Commercial Products

Commercial smoothies credit the same as smoothies made on site. Product formulation and labeling can vary greatly because commercial smoothies do not have a federal standard of identity. To credit commercial smoothies in school meals and ASP snacks, SFAs must obtain a PFS (or CN label, if available) stating the amount of all creditable ingredients per serving, such as pureed fruits and vegetables, juice, yogurt, and milk (refer to “[Required Crediting Documentation](#)” in this document).



- **Crediting pureed vegetables/fruits:** Commercial smoothies made with pureed fruits/vegetables credit only as juice toward the fruits component or vegetables component. Crediting is based on the volume of fruits/vegetables after pureeing and before freezing. The product label must include a statement regarding the “percent juice content,” which is required by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for beverages made with fruit/vegetable juice or puree. For example, an 8-fluid ounce smoothie made from fruit puree labeled with “contains 50% juice” credits as 4 fluid ounces ( $\frac{1}{2}$  cup) of juice. SFAs may need to obtain a PFS from the manufacturer to document the amount of pureed fruit in the product.

Concentrated fruit puree and concentrated juice are added sugars. They do not credit in smoothies, unless they are reconstituted to full-strength fruit puree or full-strength juice.

- **Crediting milk:** Milk credits as the milk component when used as an ingredient in commercial smoothies. The product documentation must attest that commercial mixes with milk are made using ingredients that meet federal, state, and local definitions for fluid milk.
- **Crediting yogurt:** Yogurt or soy yogurt credits as the meat/meat alternates component when used as an ingredient in commercial smoothies. The product documentation must attest that commercial mixes with yogurt are made in compliance with the federal definition for yogurt.

The addition of yogurt to a smoothie is not a substitution for fluid milk in the NSLP and SBP meal patterns. Fluid milk must be offered in all meals to meet the milk component requirement.



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- **Limit for crediting amount:** The total creditable amount in a smoothie cannot exceed the volume served. For example, ½ cup of a commercial smoothie cannot credit as 1 cup of juice.
- **Noncreditable commercial smoothies:** Probiotic dairy drinks, drinkable yogurt, and yogurt drinks are not smoothies, and do not credit in the preschool meal patterns. Commercial smoothies that contain dietary supplements (such as whey protein powder) or herbal supplements (such as ginkgo biloba, ginseng, and echinacea) do not credit in the preschool meal patterns.

SFAs must refer to the product’s PFS to check for 1) volumes of pureed fruits and vegetables prior to freezing; and 2) documentation that milk and yogurt (if included) meet the meal pattern requirements (refer to “[Required Crediting Documentation](#)” in this document).

Commercial smoothies cannot credit in school meals and ASP snacks without a PFS (or a CN label for commercial fruit and vegetable smoothies that contain yogurt). SFAs must review PFS forms for accuracy.

### Signage requirement

The USDA’s regulations require SFAs to identify the food components offered to students. Schools serving smoothies should inform students about the components included by listing the type of smoothie on the menu and serving line signage, e.g., “peach and milk smoothie” or “strawberry, yogurt, and milk smoothie.” For more information, refer to “Meal Identification Signage” in the CSDE’s [Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12](#). For sample signage templates, visit New England Dairy’s [Smoothies](#) webpage.





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## Resources

Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Accepting\\_Proccsed\\_Product\\_Documentation\\_SNP.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Accepting_Proccsed_Product_Documentation_SNP.pdf)

Crediting Juice for Grades K-12 for the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit\\_Juice\\_SNP\\_grades\\_K-12.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Juice_SNP_grades_K-12.pdf)

Crediting Yogurt for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit\\_Yogurt\\_SNP\\_grades\\_K-12.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Yogurt_SNP_grades_K-12.pdf)

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>

Fruits Component for Grades K-12 (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Documents#Fruits>

Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Meat/Meat Alternates Component for Grades K-12 (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Documents#MMA>

Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12 (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Menu-Planning-Guide-for-School-Meals>

Product Formulation Statement (Product Analysis) for Meat/Meat Alternate (M/MA) Products in Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

[https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS\\_Meats-Meat\\_Alternates\\_Fillable\\_508.pdf](https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Meats-Meat_Alternates_Fillable_508.pdf)

Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Vegetables and Fruits in School Meal Programs (USDA):

[https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS\\_Veg\\_Subgroups\\_Fruits\\_Fillable\\_508.pdf](https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Veg_Subgroups_Fruits_Fillable_508.pdf)

Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Vegetables and Fruits in School Meal Programs – Completed Sample for Vegetables (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFSsamplevegetables.pdf>

Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Vegetables and Fruits in School Meal Programs – Completed Sample for Fruits (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFSsamplefruits.pdf>

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Product Formulation Statements (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Product\\_Formulation\\_Statements.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Product_Formulation_Statements.pdf)

Reviewer's Checklist for Evaluating Manufacturer Product Formulation Statements for Meat/Meat Alternates (USDA):

[https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/reviewer\\_checklist.pdf](https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/reviewer_checklist.pdf)

Smoothies (New England Dairy):

<https://www.newenglanddairy.com/smoothies/>

Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement (USDA):

<https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/manufacturerPFStipsheet.pdf>

USDA Memo SP 24-2020, CACFP 13-2020 and SFSP 13-2020: Questions and Answers for the Child Nutrition Programs during School Year 2020-21 – #5:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/disaster/pandemic/covid-19/questions-and-answers-child-nutrition-programs-during-sy-2020-21>

USDA Memo SP 40-2019, CACFP 17-2019 and SFSP 17-2019: Smoothies Offered in Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/smoothies-offered-child-nutrition-programs>

Vegetable Subgroups in the NSLP (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Vegetable\\_Subgroups\\_NSLP.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Vegetable_Subgroups_NSLP.pdf)

Vegetables Component for Grades K-12 (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Documents#Vegetables>

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For more information, visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpages, or contact the [school nutrition programs staff](#) in the CSDE's Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This document is available at [https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit\\_Smoothies\\_SNP\\_grades\\_K-12.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Smoothies_SNP_grades_K-12.pdf).

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- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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